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Diner clash

Red tape holds up expansion
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New publisher

John Tobon takes the helm
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Happy trails

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Koats for Kids

And adults, too
Page 15

IMPORT NEWS

SERVING PORT COLBORNE • WAINFLEET • SHERKSTON • LOWBANKS • ISSUE NO. 47 VOLUME 16

For news updated daily see www.importnews.ca

■ **SKATEPARK:** Snack stand suggested at Lock 8 park

Something to chew on

MARYANNE FIRTH
InPort News Staff

PORT COLBORNE — If you build it, they will come. But once there, skaters may get thirsty.

While construction of Port Colborne's new skateboard and BMX park is well underway, the mayor's youth advisory council is thinking well past its completion.

The group sought approval from council to investigate the construction

of an additional marine-themed structure at Lock 8 Park to be used for further fundraising opportunities.

The structure would be used to sell snacks and refreshments, and as a hub to facilitate various events at the skatepark once it's up and running. Proceeds would support MYAC's \$70,000 commitment to the city for the construction of the park, which is expected to cost a total \$846,377.

see **SKATE PARK** | page 2



SUPPLIED ILLUSTRATION

Port Colborne's mayor's youth advisory council gained approval from council Tuesday to investigate construction of an additional marine-themed structure at the site of the skatepark at Lock 8 Park.

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upfront

■ SKATE PARK

Grand opening scheduled for spring

FROM PAGE 1

The additional structure will only be constructed if sponsorship can be found and it is built at zero cost to the city.

MYAC members have

agreed to staff the structure for free and will pay for the merchandise that is sold within, Ward 2 Coun. Yvon Doucet told council.

"It will not cost the city a penny," he stressed.

Ward 3 Coun. Bea Kenny asked that maintenance of the structure also be covered by the youth advisory committee.

Having obtained council's approval Tuesday,

city staff will now move forward in meeting with potential sponsors that have expressed interest, obtaining cost estimates and meeting with representatives of the St. Lawrence

Seaway Management Corp. in hopes of gaining permission to build the addition on the property.

Construction of the park is on budget but slightly behind schedule. Work is

expected to be completed later this month with a grand opening celebration to take place in the spring.

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■ FESTIVE SPIRIT: House tour supports youth and family outreach programs

Holiday homes await visitors

DAVE JOHNSON
InPort News Staff

PORT COLBORNE — Even though Christmas is still more than a month away, people taking part in an annual house tour will have a sneak peek into homes already decorated for the holiday season.

The fifth annual Port Colborne Winter Celebration Holiday House Tour takes place on Saturday, Nov. 24, from noon to 5 p.m. at six locations in the city.

Bonnie Harris, a member of St. James and St. Brendan Anglican Church and a house tour volunteer, said the event supports youth and family outreach programs at The Hub and Guild Hall.

"On average, we raise \$7,500 from it," she said Wednesday morning, adding there's only 300 tickets for the tour.

"We have a very generous community," added Rev. Robert Hurkmans of St. James and St. Brendan Anglican Church.

There's usually five or six homes on the tour each year that are decorated for the holidays, with the interiors all done up nicely, said Harris.

Though organizers try not to repeat homes on the tour each year, there are people that want to be a regular part of it, Harris said.

Cindi Pohonick-Talbot was one who opened her Tennessee Ave. home for a

couple of years.

The homes on this year's tour are a mix of historic and new. Volunteers will be inside each as visitors arrive.

Harris said the homes are kept secret until the day of the tour when a map is given out at the Guild Hall, at 72 Charlotte St. The Guild Hall is the starting location and where tickets are purchased the day of the tour.

Hurkmans said in addition to the tour, there's an "awesome lunch" at the Guild Hall and a silent auction with craft vendors and more there as well.

More information can be found at www.wintercelebration.org.

HOUSE TOUR

■ Tickets are \$15 in advance, \$20 at the door.

■ Tickets can be purchased at Something Else, Family Shoe Store, LakeBreeze Bed and Breakfast and St. James and St. Brendan Anglican Church.

■ Sponsors include LakeBreeze Bed and Breakfast, Something Else, Scotiabank, Davidson Funeral Home, Boogie Family of Pharmacies, Port Paint and Paper, Business Express Centre, Giant FM, Niagara Insurance, Family Shoe Store and Super Service Rubber Stamp and Sign Ltd.



DAVE JOHNSON Staff Photo

Bonnie Harris, a volunteer with the fifth annual Port Colborne Winter Celebration Holiday House Tour, and Rev. Robert Hurkmans of St. James and St. Brendan Anglican Church are encouraging people to take part in the annual tour.

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■ **BUREAUCRACY:** Domenic's Diner owner facing fees four times as high as expansion costs

Red tape hard to swallow

MARYANNE FIRTH
InPort News Staff

WAINFLEET — Domenic Chirico is tired of seeing red — tape that is.

The owner of Domenic's Diner was looking to expand his restaurant at Chambers Corners to add 30 seats, but after inquiring about associated costs through the Township of Wainfleet his plans have come to a halt.

Chirico, a Fenwick resident and longtime restaurateur, wanted to put a portable, similar to those found at schools, beside his establishment. Installed with heating and air conditioning, the portable would cost about \$4,500, he said.

But when he contacted the township, he learned fees to legally put the addition on the property would amount to a whopping \$19,000.

The seven-by-nine-metre portable could have either been attached to the west side of the existing building or left detached, Chirico said. It was to be used as additional seating during the diner's weekly car show held each Sunday during the warmer months, as well as for special bookings such as showers and large group gatherings.

To build an addition of a comparable size would have cost upward of \$140,000, he added.

"I need those 30 seats so I can stay alive," Chirico said of the restaurant, which now has about 60 seats.

From the time he purchased the property two years ago, he had planned to expand.

But since learning of the exorbitant costs, Chirico has put his business up for sale.

If assistance were avail-



Domenic's Diner owner Domenic Chirico says red tape has prevented him from expanding seating at his establishment at Chambers Corners in Wainfleet.

MARYANNE FIRTH Staff Photo

able, however, he said he would "take it off the market tomorrow."

Despite the For Sale sign in the window, the restaurant remains open.

The fees required for the addition to move forward come not only from the township but also from Niagara Region and the provincial government, said Grant Munday, Wainfleet's manager of planning.

As the property in question is commercial, it is subject to site plan control by the township, which comes along with application fees.

It's also at the junction of a provincial highway and regional road, which adds to the cost.

Expanding the establishment may mean increased traffic at the intersection, Munday said, and a traf-

fic study is required by the Ministry of Transportation before the project can move forward.

Development charges from both the township and the region also apply to the expansion.

The town charges \$3.96 per square foot and the region \$6.46 per square foot for commercial properties. A permit fee of \$1.17 per square foot is also required for an addition to a restaurant, Munday said.

Without an official detailed proposal submitted, it's difficult to tell what the final total would be, he added.

While some municipalities offer incentives for business expansion and new development, Wainfleet does not have any programs in place, Munday said.

At Tuesday night's town-

ship council meeting a presentation was to be made by the region to outline incentives that may be available locally.

The town, he said, could explore the idea of community improvement plans to assist businesses, but that's all at council's discretion.

"It all boils down to a fairness issue," Munday said.

If the township gives relief on development charges to one business or developer, others will expect to receive the same courtesy, he said.

Criteria must be developed if incentives are to be given, he said.

If the town were to forgo development fees, it would have to recoup them elsewhere, which could fall on taxpayers' shoulders, he added.

"I understand people are not thrilled but they do serve a purpose and benefit the community," Wainfleet Mayor April Jeffs said of development charges.

"We certainly don't want to make things difficult for businesses," she said, adding she is "sympathetic" with Chirico's situation.

Jeffs said she's always open to discuss these situations with local business owners and residents, but has yet been approached to speak with Chirico about the situation.

In the coming months, the township, Jeffs said, will be working with Niagara Region's recently appointed director of economic development, Diane Simovic, to determine whether the economic development needs of Wainfleet's business owners are being met and what steps can be made to assist where needed.

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I understand people are not thrilled but [development charges] do serve a purpose and benefit the community."

Wainfleet Mayor April Jeffs

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ourview

Wakey Wakey

It's important to remember, when discussing debatable merits of energy drinks and products, that caffeine is a drug. Like most drugs it is used recreationally, and medicinally, for a variety of reasons with a variety of effects. It can help people. And it can really, really hurt them.

Last week the energy industry hit another low, when the U.S. Food and Drug Administration announced it is investigating 13 deaths that may be linked to "energy shots." The FDA has received 92 reports of illnesses occurring after the consumption of 5-Hour Energy, a product also sold in Canada.

The news sparked renewed calls north of the border for a ban on sale of energy drinks to anyone under the age of 19, and led to reiterated warnings about mixing energy shots and drinks with alcohol.

Naturally then ensued the backlash—consumers of energy products do not need Big Brother monitoring their heart rates, and what about all those who drink coffee? Energy drinks in Canada are classified as "natural health products" and manufacturers are required to print their caffeine content and recommended dosage on their labels. Unfortunately there is evidence those labels are sometimes understated.

Caffeine is the world's most widely used psychoactive drug, consumed by 90% of adults daily. In large doses it can be toxic, and as little as 250 mg a day can lead to caffeineism, an addiction characterized by heart palpitations, headaches, nervousness, irritability and insomnia.

Consuming caffeine can also make a person feel alert and clear-headed.

But then so can a good night's sleep.

■ COLUMN

I've been thinking about morality

REV. THOMAS P. ARTH
First Evangelical Lutheran Church

Recently I was watching the news and there was a piece about religion in China. The report stated that young people are increasingly returning to religion, something that was practically outlawed for decades. While still somewhat controlled, religion is becoming somewhat freer and the government has even recognized the benefits of religion for psychological support and moral education.

That got me thinking and wondering about just how religion and the church here in North America provide moral education. During the recent election campaign in the U.S., besides the overwhelming focus on economic issues, there was also some discussion of certain moral issues.

It would appear to many, at least from what we heard in the media and from the candidates, that the only moral issues that matter these days are abortion and same-sex marriage. In speaking to those topics each side in the political debate was only too ready and eager to pounce on the other side for their stand.

But is that all that morality is about? Sex? When most people talk about or think about morality or immorality, they think about sexual immorality. Those two topics are the ones that get so much attention: who you choose to have sex with, and the results or consequences

that sometimes follow. But what else is morality about and why don't we hear more about those other issues?

During the conventions and debates in the U.S. election the phrase "middle class" was probably used more than any other. Now certainly a strong middle class is good for a country but Jesus never talked about the middle class. In Matthew 25 he said, "What you have done to the least of these, you have done to me."

Immorality is about more than sexual immorality. Our financial and political choices can be immoral when they ignore the plight of the sick, the vulnerable, the weak, the elderly, the stranger, the refugee, the hungry and thirsty, the prisoner, all those who Jesus would call "the least of these."

What about the morality of war? Sometimes, unfortunately, war seems to be inevitable but sometimes politicians send our young men and women into wars that are unnecessary and wrong. We often seem quick, and on occasion even eager, to look for military solutions to conflicts rather than diplomatic means.

What about the morality of our environmental stewardship or lack thereof? Americans especially talk about reducing their dependence on foreign oil. It would be better for us all to questions our dependence, even addition, to oil and other fossil fuels that threaten the future of our grandchildren, and especially those in the poorest nations, with dramatic

climate change.

I asked earlier how religion and the church here in North America provide moral education. I'm not so sure that's something we're directly involved in at my church. We don't have classes in morality, in what to do and what not to do. I don't wag my finger from the pulpit when I'm preaching with "now don't you dare," or anything like that. I try, in my preaching, to proclaim the Gospel, the Good News of what God has done and is doing for us. We certainly hear the stories and teachings from scripture about what God would have us do and not do as followers of Jesus. Preaching is also about God's law and teachings that drive us to Jesus, and convict us and convince us that we need the Good News of God's grace.

What about moral education kind of sideways. When we realize all that God has done for us then maybe we live a life of thankfulness that results in moral living. When we realize how much God loves us with a love that we don't earn or deserve then we'll live out that love in our lives as love for our neighbour. When Jesus was asked the morality question, about the most important of God's laws, he gave a two part answer. Love God, that's the most important, and a second is like it, love your neighbour. He also taught us the way to love God is by loving our neighbour. May this be so among us, and as we live out our lives by loving in this way we can't help but live moral lives.

■ COLUMN

Enough already with the giant vegetables

Now that Halloween is over and the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair has closed and fall has begun its slide into winter and Mister Green Jeans has made no attempt to sprout out of the ground like a perennial, can we please, for the love of God and garden, stop with those half-ton vegetables that require a licensed tow motor operator to pick?!

Please! They're ugly, they're inedible and they can't fit inside the warehouses any more.

Now this may sound like a personal peccadillo (and somewhere there's probably an over-sized one of those



WILLIAM THOMAS
HUMOUR

growing as I write this) but unusually large vegetables are frightening. They're like the Blob: they just lie there looking at you eventually rising and seeping evil in all directions.

A pumpkin the size of a convenience store may have been a real rarity a dozen years ago but now every farm I

drive by has a zucchini the size of a silo and a gourd that could double as the maintenance garage.

Last week John Vincent, a farmer from Picton, delivered a 993-lb. squash to Prime Minister Stephen Harper's house at 24 Sussex Dr. in Ottawa. For a Halloween display, the half-ton squash was displayed at Harper's front door next to the 1,031-lb. pumpkin John also grew.

Given his popularity with Canadians, Stephen Harper is apparently OK with vegetables on his doorstep as long as they're too big to be tossed.

see **WILLIAM THOMAS** | page 5

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■ WILLIAM THOMAS

The world of giant vegetables is changing

FROM PAGE 4

Nothing new, Harper frequently surrounds himself with an assortment of garden-variety vegetables. They're known as his cabinet.

John, 'King of The 500-Kilo Cucurbit', is known as "the world champion grower of giant vegetables."

So protective is he of his property, John cut a hole in the bottom of that 993-lb. squash he gave Harper and raked out the seeds which he then took back to his farm.

Wow! Stephen Harper stole billions from Canadians when he reneged on our income trust investments and now he can't be trusted with pumpkin seeds. What else don't we know about this guy?

My seeds are in high demand," says John proudly. John is not just a produce farmer; he's a "master giant vegetable grower" who hosts seminars in which he teaches green-thumbers how to grow a head of cabbage the size of a Jeep Cherokee.

I'm looking at a photo of John kneeling beside and dwarfed by this massive cabbage and I'm thinking it would take one day for two Mexican farm labourers with machetes to turn this thing into colelaw.



Seminars? You could actually take a course on growing really big vegetables?

Yes, and when you graduate from the University of Giant Greens you receive a framed certificate that is so big, you can only hang it on the Great Wall of China.

No, sorry but this producing giant vegetables just naturally has to stop. As Canadians, do we want to be famous for growing a tomato that really did eat Cleveland?

Where will this all end? Will the John Vincents of the agricultural world not be happy until we have a corn stalk taller than the CN

Tower or a leafy carrot so big that it winds up on the White House lawn replacing the Christmas tree? No, this has got to stop. No civilized and developed nation should strive to

grow a bell pepper that can be seen from the space station. I don't think we've thought this thing through. I mean if we start growing beans the size of bananas, Beano will have to be packaged in oil drums. Sorry but I just don't think the world is ready to witness a five-ton

eggplant on wheels in a fight-to-the-death demolition derby with the Oscar Mayer Wienermobile. OK, I'd pay 25 bucks to watch that ... but still, it's wrong.

The squash John left on Harper's doorstep (and doesn't this routine cry out for the "paper bag on fire" trick) earned first place at this fall's Port Elgin Pumpkinfest.

I say currently because the world of giant vegetables is changing faster than the wind at a cow patty toss. Russia is rumored to be developing a pumpkin that doubles as a nuclear aircraft carrier and Australia has grown a mango that serves as a Koala bear sanctuary and drinks beer from the bottle. Pumpkinfest? Really? From a Pumpkin Queen and a parade marchband shaped like a pie?

Look, nobody wants to see

the secret recipe for this kind of miracle growing make the leap from vegetables to humans. A person twice as big as Herman Munster with the ego the size of Conrad Black and the reasoning power of Rob Ford would be a very dangerous creature ... no matter how desperately the Leafs would want to sign him. Let's remember The Jolly Green Giant did not die naturally.

His head was crushed by a 210-lb. pea that accidentally fell off a 900-lb. bean stalk while Jolly was sleeping one off in the garden. Sorry but this industry of giant vegetables is not too big to fail. It is so ridiculously big it must fail. Let's get back to growing vegetables for the plate and not the double garage. As I said, they scare me.

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■ NEWSPAPERS

John Tobon new Tribune publisher

In Port News Staff

WELLAND — John Tobon has been named the new publisher of *The Tribune*, *Inport News* and *Pelham News*.

Tobon, who was born in Colombia and moved to Niagara as a youngster, took over at *The Tribune* Wednesday.

He joined Sun Media in 2010 as regional advertising director, based out of The St. Catharines Standard.

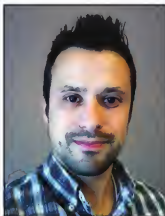
Tobon got started in the newspaper industry when he was 22 and attending Brock University.

"I'm truly excited and honoured to take on the role of publisher. I'm looking forward to new challenges as well as working with a great team and community," he said.

Julia Coles has been named the new advertising manager of *The Tribune*.

She replaces Mike Cressman, who is now publisher at *The Niagara Falls Review*.

Originally from Welland, Coles began her newspaper career with *The Tribune* and has held several advertising positions with *The Standard* for more than 20 years.



John Tobon

"I am looking forward to both the opportunities and challenges in the newspaper business as it undergoes its continuing evolution," she said.

Ken Koyama is the new group publisher of the *Brantford Expositor*, *Simcoe Reformer* and three other titles.

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■ **REAL ESTATE:** Shell undertaking site remediation

Cleanup at marine fuelling terminal lands

DAVE JOHNSON
InPort News Staff

PORT COLBOURNE — An environmental cleanup on the former Shell marine terminal lands at 12 King St. is underway.

Verity Conrad, communications adviser for Shell Canada Ltd., said the company operated the marine terminal, used to fuel ships passing through the Welland Canal, until July 2007 and has since removed its assets.

As part of the decommissioning process Shell investigated the site conditions relating to its former use of petroleum storage operations, she said in an e-mail.

"Shell is currently executing a remediation plan to allow the property to be put back into productive

use. Shell is actively consulting with the Ministry of Environment and expects to have the majority of the site work completed by the end of 2012."

In 2005 the City of Port Colborne purchased the land on which the marine terminal sat. In early 2006 it decided to put the land up for sale.

Nyon Marine Fuelling Corp. had proposed to put its own fuelling station on the property. Nyon was negotiating with St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corp. on the fuel station, but no agreement was reached.

The issue has been stagnant for the past few years and, in an e-mail, Mayor Vance Badawey said Nyon still owns the lands and no new proposals have come before the city.

dave.johnson@sunmedia.ca



DAVE JOHNSON Staff Photo
An environmental cleanup on the former Shell marine terminal lands at 12 King St. in Port Colborne is underway, said a spokesperson for Shell Canada Ltd.

C2 ENTERTAINMENT PRESENTS



Derek Marshall



Colleen Ayrn

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LAXATIVES AND CONSTIPATION

Very rarely does a day go by where there isn't a question about constipation from a patient stopping by the pharmacy. Most patients want to know what they should take that is available without a prescription.

Constipation is a symptom that occurs when waste moves too slowly through the body, resulting in stool that is dry and hard. This often makes it difficult and painful to pass.

Some medications such as antidepressants, water pills, and certain pain killers (such as Oxycontin and Codeine) may cause constipation.

The frequency of bowel movements varies from person to person, from as little as twice a week to a couple of times a day, and is affected by diet, medications, and exercise.

If you are having trouble going to the washroom, the first thing a pharmacist will usually recommend is increasing the amount of fibre in the diet by eating whole grains, fruits and vegetables. In addition, drinking at least 8 glasses of water will minimize constipation.

If these suggestions do not work, there are several options available to you.

For short-term treatment of constipation, (if you haven't been to the washroom in several days), a saline laxative such as Milk of Magnesia can be tried. Alternatively glycerin suppositories work quite well. If symptoms still do not resolve you could consider an enema with the advice of your physician.

Stimulant laxatives such as Dulcolax and Senokot can also be used to maintain regularity. If you are on long term narcotic therapy you may need to take these types of medications as long as you are taking the narcotics.

For long-term treatment of constipation, bulk-forming agents such as Metamucil or Prodiem Plain can be used. These bulk-forming agents increase the stool weight, allowing the stool to pass through the body faster and cause more frequent bowel movements. These agents typically take about 12-72 hours to take effect and are usually safe to use for long periods of time. When taking bulk-forming agents, it is recommended to drink lots of fluid.

For young children there are a few options. For immediate relief a pediatric glycerin suppository can be tried. For chronic long term management PEG 3350 is often prescribed, or is available over-the-counter as LAX-A-Day. You should consult your family doctor however if you want to try an oral medication for a child suffering from chronic constipation.

If you are not having trouble going to the washroom, but you find the stool to be too hard and painful to pass, the pharmacist may recommend a stool softener such as Colace (docusate sodium) that will soften the stool for increased comfort.

Before deciding on a therapy, talk to a pharmacist and they can help you decide on a treatment that is right for you.

inPortbriefs

SEASONAL AFFECTIVE DISORDER WORKSHOP

PORT COLBORNE — For some people, the shortening days of late autumn are the beginning of a type of clinical depression that can last until spring.

This condition is called Seasonal Affective Disorder or SAD. SAD can be a debilitating condition, preventing sufferers from functioning normally. It may affect their personal and professional lives, and seriously limit their potential.

Symptoms can include a change in appetite with a craving for sweet or starchy foods, fatigue, decreased energy, avoidance of social situations, and feelings of anxiety or despair. It is important to learn about the symptoms, and to know that there is treatment to help people with SAD live a productive life year-round.

Bridges Community Health Centre is offering a workshop to introduce healthy coping skills and options for adults living with, or who think they may have, Seasonal Affective Disorder.

The workshop will be led by social worker, Len Dykstra, and will be held on Thursday, Nov. 22, 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at 177 King St., Port Colborne. To register, please call Gail at 289-479-5017 X242.

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CANAL CLOSING DATE

PORT COLBORNE — The Welland Canal will remain open until midnight Wednesday, Dec.

26, said the St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corp.

In a release, the seaway said vessels travelling through the canal after midnight on the 26th will only be permitted subject to prior written agreement made

through the St. Catharines office.

"Vessels will be allowed to transit the canal up to 23:59 hours on December 30th, weather and operating conditions permitting," the release said.

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■ TOURISM: Sights set on cyclists

Wainfleet joining provincial cycling and walking waterfront trail

VICTORIA GRAY
InPort News Staff

WAINFLEET — A \$500 donation for marketing almost scared township council away from joining a provincial cycling and walking trail.

Aldermen and city staff went back and forth for 20 minutes debating the cost of joining the The Lake Erie Waterfront Trail. Township treasurer Robyn Madere said even though the township's miscellaneous

grants and donations fund only had \$167, other funds could come from other departments that have cash to spare.

The waterfront regeneration group wants to expand the trail to include all of Ontario's lakefront. It starts in Quebec, comes into Ontario and spans cities along the water from Cornwall to Niagara-on-the-Lake.

The Waterfront Regeneration Trust hopes to expand the trail from there south past Windsor to end in Lakeshore, Ont.

The trail in Wainfleet will go along Lakeshore Rd. The trust will provide signs and the city will have to pay staff \$2.5 per sign to install them, at a total cost of \$225.

Ald. Richard Dykstra didn't want to commit to giving the



Munday

Waterfront Regeneration Trust the small donation toward advertising for the trail annually because the township may not have the extra money down the road.

Alderman Betty Konec also had reservations.

"This may cost more than what it's saying in the report," she said. "What happens in 2013 — will we turn other people away?"

While Akis, Ted Hessesels and David Wyatt supported the trail

they didn't know if winding Lakeshore Rd. is safe to advertise as a bicycle-friendly road.

But planning manager Grant Munday fought to make council see the trail as part of Wainfleet's recreation master plan and a good way to bring people to the township.

"Cycling is very popular in the province and since cyclists can't carry very much they stop and take advantage of local shops and restaurants," he said. He also said many cyclists

already use the road and there haven't been any accidents.

Mayor April Jeffs backed Munday, saying it's important to follow the recreation master plan — and getting people to Wainfleet is a large part of it.

"I think it will bring tourists and it will be great for places along the trail, and there are a lot of people who bicycle," she said.

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■ **PUBLIC WORKS:** Watermain replacement for Port Colborne

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MARYANNE FIRTH
InPort News Staff

PORT COLBORNE — The lakeside city will soon have a nice set of pipes.

Last week, council awarded a watermain rehabilitation project to Stevensville-based Peters

Excavating at a cost of \$591,953 plus tax.

The project includes replacement and reconnection of watermain on Clarence St. from Steele St. to Fielden Ave.; Snider St. from Fielden Ave. to Elm St.; and Elm St. from Main St. W. to Rosedale Ave.

Also included is a service extension requested by the city's parks department at 550 Elizabeth St. off Wellington St. for watering the existing soccer fields.

Eight contractors bid on the job. Peters Excavating offered the lowest bid.

Council previously

approved the watermain rehabilitation budget at \$500,000 with an additional \$20,000 allotted from the parks department budget for the service extension.

The remaining funds, \$71,953, were recommended by staff to be allocated from the 2013 watermain reha-

bilitation budget.

Construction is slated to begin in the spring and to be completed prior to the city's summer festival schedule.

In a separate project, taken on by Niagara Region in partnership with the municipality, the watermain on Killaly St. between Knoll

and King Sts. will also be replaced next spring.

The region will be reconstructing the roadway, with Port Colborne first tackling the infrastructure improvements.

maryanne.firth@sunmedia.ca
Twitter: @mfirth17bune



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■ KOATS FOR KIDS AND ADULTS



SARAH FERGUSON Staff Photo

From left, Stefani Katulic-Ducharme, family and community program co-ordinator at Port Cares, with volunteers Jessica Jacobson and Candy Bell-Dionne, organize coats for the Koats for Kids and Adults program.

The Koats for Kids and Adults program distributes winter clothing every Monday and Friday between 1 p.m. to 4 p.m., until Dec. 14 at the former restaurant behind the Royal Bank building on Clarence St. in Port Colborne. Donations of gently loved and new coats, hats, gloves, scarves and boots for children and adults can still be dropped off at Lighthouse's Cleaners at 388 Queen St. For more information call Port Cares at 905-834-3629 ext. 278.

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■ HEART NIAGARA GIVES TO PORT

Port Colborne fire Chief Tom Cartwright accepts one of three defibrillators presented to the city Tuesday night by Heart Niagara, represented by executive director Karen Stearne.



MARYANNE FIRTH Staff Photo

■ 25 YEARS OF SERVICE



MARYANNE FIRTH Staff Photo

Janice Peyton, executive assistant to Port Colborne's director of engineering and operations, is presented with an award for 25 years of service with the city. The award was presented by Mayor Vance Badawey. Equipment operator Steve Agoston was also honoured for 25 years of service, though he was absent from the presentation.

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■ **NIAGARA EMS:** Paramedics will be cruising in taller, smarter vehicles

New Mercedes-Benz ambulances ready to roll

KARENA WALTER
QMI Agency Niagara

ST. CATHARINES — Taller, sleeker, smarter ambulances are starting to hit the region's roads in a move Niagara Emergency Medical Services expects will save money and leave less of an environmental footprint.

"We're excited about these new vehicles. There's a lot of benefits," said Allen McKay, Niagara EMS associate director of administration. "They're a safer vehicle for our medics and it's going to be a more comfortable ride for our patients."

McKay, who's in charge of the EMS fleet, said nine new ambulances will be on the road by the end of November or early December as part of an annual replacement process that sees ambulances 4 1/2 to five years old replaced.

But this year, Niagara EMS has gone with a different auto-



Photo courtesy Niagara EMS

New ambulances such as this one are starting to hit Niagara's roads.

maker, opting for Mercedes-Benz over Ford since Ford has discontinued its model equipped with a diesel engine.

McKay said Niagara EMS wanted to stick with diesel because it offers better fuel mileage and longer engine life. After putting out tenders, it chose the Mercedes-Benz model from a vendor in Saskatchewan.

Niagara EMS has 38 ambulances that cover the entire region and eventually they will all be decommissioned for the new models.

McKay said at any given time, there are 22 ambulances on the road and 26 at peak capacity. They drive more than two million kilometres a year and answer more than 80,000 calls.

"It does take the wear and tear on our vehicles."

McKay said the new vehicles are cleaner, with zero emissions and have better anti-lock brakes, stability control, front-impact airbags and a security system in which the ignition is disabled.

They also require less frequent preventative maintenance, at 10,000 or 12,000 kilometres versus the current 6,000 kilometres. The smaller vehicles are taller so medics are able to stand — a problem for some of the taller members of Niagara EMS in the older vehicles.

McKay said the chassis cost between \$140,000 and \$150,000 — the majority of the cost being the conversion of putting the box on the back.

"The cost benefits to going with this platform are just overwhelming," McKay said.

"When you're driving over two million kilometres a year over our region, which is 1,850 square kilometres, that's a huge geography to cover with 38 ambulances. It made sense to move in this direction, look at doing things differently and trying to save money."

McKay said there won't be significant fuel reductions in the first year because there are only nine models on the road, but as more vehicles are replaced, fuel and repair maintenance savings should be realized.

By the end of the week, three of the new-style ambulances are expected to be in service. The rest are at the fleet centre in Welland, where they are being commissioned to be put on the road.

It's a process that takes about two weeks per ambulance, as radio packages and provincial infrastructure is

moved from the old vehicle into the new.

While it usually takes about a year from ordering a new ambulance to having it on the road, McKay said it's taken a little longer this time because Niagara EMS had to train all 300 of its paramedics to use the new configuration at the back of the ambulance.

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2,000,000
kilometres Niagara EMS
covers in a year
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calls Niagara EMS responds
to in a year
38
ambulances in the
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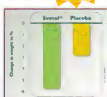
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